

The Adventures of Kathlyn

By HAROLD MACGRATH

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Juggernaut, or Jagannath in Hindustani (meaning Lord of the World), was an idol so hideously done in wood that the prince of hell would have taken it to be the personification of a damned soul could he have glimpsed it in the temple of Allaha. The god's face was black, his lips and mouth horribly and significantly red; his eyes were polished emeralds, his arms were of gilt, his body like that of a toad. His temporal reign in Allaha was somewhere near four hundred years, and no doubt his emerald eyes had seen a crimson trail behind his car as many hundred times.

He was married frequently. Some poor, benighted, fanatical woman would pledge herself and would be considered with awe till she died. But in these times no one flung himself under the car; nothing but the incense of crushed flowers now followed his wake. His grin, however, was the same as of old. Wood, paint, gilt and emeralds! Well, we enlightened Europeans sometimes worship these very things, though we indignantly deny it. Outside the temple stood the car, fantastically carved, dull with rubbed gold leaf. You could see the sockets where horrid knives had once glittered in the sunlight. Xerxes no doubt founded his war chariots upon this idea. The wheels, six in number, two in front and two on each side, were solid, broad, and heavy, capable of smoothing out a corrugated winter road. The superstructure was an ornate shrine, which contained the idol on its peregrinations to the river.

About the car were the devotees some holding the ropes, others watching the entrance to the temple. Presently from the temple came the gurus or priests, bearing the idol. With much reverence they placed the idol within the shrine, the pilgrims took hold firmly of the ropes, and the car rattled and thundered on its way to the river.

Of Juggernaut and his car more anon.

The street outside the garden or brides was in reality no thoroughfare though natives occasionally made use of it as a short cut into town. There fore no one observed the entrance of an elephant, which stopped close to the wall, seemingly to melt into the drab of it. On his back, however, the howdah was conspicuous. Behind the curtains Kathlyn patiently waited. She was about to turn away in despair when through the wicker gate she saw Winnie, attended by one of the zenana girls, enter the garden. It seemed as if her will reached out to bring Winnie to the wall and to hold the other young woman where she was.

But the two sat in the center of the garden, the thoughts of each far away. The attendant felt no worry in bringing Winnie into the garden. A cry from her lips would bring a dozen guards and eunuchs from the palace. And the white girl could not get out alone. More than this, she gave Winnie liberty in order to trap her if possible.

By and by the native girl pretended to feel drowsy in the heat of the sun and her head fell forward a trifle. It was then that Winnie heard a low whistle, an old familiar whistle such as she and Kit had used once upon a time in playing "a spy." She sat up rigidly. It was hard work not to cry out. Over the wall the drab trunk of an elephant protruded, and something white fluttered into the garden.

Winnie rose. The head of the native girl came up instinctively; but as Winnie leisurely strolled toward the palace, the head sank again. Winnie turned and wandered along the walls apparently examining the flowers and vines, but all the while moving nearer and nearer to the bit of white paper which the idle breeze stirred back and forth tentatively. When she reached the spot she stooped and plucked some flowers, gathering up the paper as she did so. And, still in the stooping posture, she read the note, crumpled it and stuffed it into a hole in the wall.

Poor child! Every move had been watched as a cobra watches its prey. She was to pretend illness at once. Plans had been changed. She stood up, awayed slightly, and staggered back to the seat. In truth, she was pale enough, and her heart beat so fast that she was horribly dizzy.

"A doctor!" she cried, forgetting that she would not be understood. The native girl stared at her. She did not understand the words, but the signs were enough. The young white woman looked ill; and Umballa would deal harshly with those who failed to stem the tide of any illness which might befall his captive. There was a commotion behind the fretwork of the palace. Three other girls came out, and Winnie was conducted back to the

desire she could not but admire Winnie's superb acting. To have come all this way alone in search of them, unfamiliar with the customs and the language of the people! How she had succeeded in getting here without mishap was in itself remarkable.

She took Winnie's wrist in her hand and pressed it reassuringly, then puttered about in her medical bag. Very softly she whispered:

"I shall remain with you till dusk. Give no sign whatever that you know me, for you will be watched. Tonight I will smuggle you out of the palace. Take these, and soon pretend to be quieted."

Winnie swallowed the bits of sugar and lay back. Kathlyn signified that she wished to be alone with her patient. Once alone with Winnie, she cast aside her veil.

"O, Kit!"

"Hush, baby! We are going to get you safely away."

"I am afraid."

"So are we all; but we must not let anyone see that we are. Father and Ahmed are near by. But oh, why did you attempt to find us?"

"But you cabled me to come, weeks ago!"

"I? Never!" And the mystery was no longer a mystery to Kathlyn. The hand of Umballa lay bare. Could they eventually win out against a man who seemed to miss no point in the game?

"You were deceived, Winnie. To think of it! We had escaped, were ready to sail for home, when we learned that you had left for India. It nearly broke our hearts."

"Whatever shall we do, Kit?" Winnie flung her arms round her sister and drew her down. "My Kit!"

"We must be brave, whatever happens."

"And am I not your sister?" quietly.

"Do you believe in me so little? Why shouldn't I be brave? But you've always treated me like a baby; you never tried to prove me."

Kathlyn's arms wound themselves tightly about the slender form. . . . And thus Umballa found them.

"Very touching!" he said, standing with his back to the door. "But nicely trapped!" He laughed as Kathlyn sprang to her feet, as her hand sought the dagger at her side. "Don't draw it," he said. "I might hurt your arm in wrenching it away from you. Poor little fool! Back into the cage, like a homing pigeon! Had I not known you all would return, think you I would have given up the chase so easily? You would not bend, so then you must break. The god Juggernaut yearns for a sacrifice to prove that we still love and worship him. You spurned my love; now you shall know my hate. You shall die, unpleasantly."

Quickly as a cat springs he caught her hands and wrenched them toward him, dragging her toward the door. Winnie sprang up from the cushions, her eyes ablaze with the fighting spirit. Too soon the door closed in her face and she heard the bolt outside go slithering home.

Said Umballa from the corridor: "To you, pretty kitten, I shall come later. I need you for my wife. When I return you will be all alone in the world, truly an orphan. And do not make your eyes red needlessly."

Winnie screamed and Kathlyn fought with the fury of a netted tigress. For a few minutes Umballa had his hands full, but in the end he conquered.

Outside the garden of brides three men waited in vain for the coming of Kathlyn and her sister.

The god Juggernaut did not repose in his accustomed niche in the temple that night. The car had to be pulled up and down a steep hill, and on the return, owing to the darkness, it was left at the top of the hill, safely propped to prevent its rolling down of its own accord. When the moon rose Juggernaut's eyes gleamed like the striped cat's. Long since he had seen a human sacrifice. Perhaps the old days would return once more. He was weary at heart riding over sickly flowers; he wanted flesh and bones and the music of the death rattle. His cousins, War and Pestilence, still took their tithes. Why should he be denied?

The whispering became a murmuring, and the murmuring grew into exultant chattering; and by ten o'clock that night all the bazaars knew that the ancient rites of Juggernaut were to be revived that night. The bazaars had never heard of Nero, called Ahenc-barbus, and, being without comparisons, they missed the greatness of their august but hampered regent Umballa.

Always the bazaars heard news before any other part of the city. The white memsahib was not dead, but had been recaptured while posing as the zenana physician in an attempt to rescue her sister, the new queen. Oh, the chief city of Allaha was in the matter of choice and unexpected amusements unrivaled in all Asia.

Yes, Umballa was not unlike Nero—to keep the populace amused so they would temporarily forget their burdens.

But why the sudden appearance of soldiers, who stood guard at every exit, compelling the inmates of the bazaars not to leave their houses? Al, al! Why this secrecy, since they knew what was going to take place? But the soldiers, ordinarily voluble, maintained grim silence, and even went so far as to extend the bayonet to all those who tried to leave the narrow streets.

"An affair of state!" was all the natives could get in answer to their inquiries. Men came flocking to the roofs. But the moonshine made all things ghostly. The car of the god Juggernaut was visible, but what lay in its path could not be seen.

Umballa was not popular that night. But this was a private affair. Well he knew the ingenuity and resources of his enemies at large. There would be no rescue this night. Kathlyn Memsahib should die; this time he determined to put fear into the hearts of the others.

Having drunk his king's peg, he was well fortified against any personal qualms. The passion he had had for Kathlyn was dead, dead as he wanted her to be.

Whom the gods destroy they first make mad; and Umballa was mad.

The palanquin waited in vain outside the wall of the garden of brides—waited till a ripple of the news eddied about the conveyance in the shape of a greatly agitated Lal Singh.

"He is really going to kill her!" he panted. "He lured her to her sister's side, then captured her. She is to be placed beneath the car of Juggernaut."



The Car of Juggernaut.

within an hour. It is to be done secretly. The people are guarded and held in the bazaars. Ahmed, with an elephant and armed keepers, will be here shortly. I have warned him. Umballa runs amuck!"

Suddenly they heard voices in the garden, first Umballa's, then Kathlyn's. Sinister portents to the ears of the listeners, father and lover and loyal friends. The former were for breaking into the garden then and there; but a glance through the wicket gate disclosed the fact that Umballa and Kathlyn were surrounded by fifteen or twenty soldiers. And they dared not fire at Umballa for fear of hitting Kathlyn.

The palanquin was hastily carried out of sight.

At the end of the passage or street nearest the town was a gate which was seldom closed. Through this one had to pass to and from the city. Going through this gate, one could make the hill (where the car of Juggernaut stood) within fifteen minutes, while a detour round the walls of the ancient city would consume three-quarters of an hour. Umballa ordered the gate to be closed and stationed a guard there. The gates clanged behind him and Kathlyn. This time he was guarding every entrance. If his enemies were within they would naturally be weak in numbers; outside, they would find it extremely difficult to make an entrance. More than this, he had sent a troop toward the colonel's camp.

The gates had scarcely been closed when Ahmed, his elephant and his armed keepers came into view. The men sent Pundita back to camp, and the actual warfare began. They approached the gate, demanding to be allowed to pass. The soldiers refused. Instantly the keepers flung themselves furiously upon the soldiers. The trooper who held the key threw it over the wall just before he was overpowered. But Ahmed had come prepared. From out the howdah he took a heavy leather pad, which he adjusted over the fore skull of the elephant, and gave a command.

The skull of the elephant is thick. Hunters will tell you that bullets glance off it as water from the back of a duck. Thus, protected by the leather pad, the elephant becomes a formidable battering ram, backed up by tons of weight. Only the solidity of stone may stay him.

Ahmed's elephant shouldered through the gates grandly. For all the resistance they offered that skull they might have been constructed of papier mache.

Through the dust they hurried. Whenever a curious native got in the way the butt of a rifle bestirred him out of it.

Umballa had lashed Kathlyn to a sapling which was laid across the path of the car. The man was mad, stark mad, this night. Even the soldiers and the devotees surrounding the car were terrified. One did not force sacrifices to Juggernaut. One soldier had protested and he lay at the bottom of the hill, his skull crushed. The others, pulled one way by greed of money and love of life, stirred no hand.

But Kathlyn Memsahib did not die under the broad wheels of the car of Juggernaut. So interested in Umballa were his men that they forgot the vigilance required to conduct such a

ceremony free of interruption. A crackling of shots, a warning cry to drop their arms, the plunging of an elephant in the path of the car, which was already thundering down the hill, spoiled Umballa's classic.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In the Arena.

While Bruce and two of his men carried Kathlyn out of harm's way to the shelter of the underbrush, where he liberated her, Ahmed drove Umballa and his panic-stricken soldiers over the brow of the hill. Umballa could be distinguished by his robes and turban, but in the moonlight Ahmed and his followers were all of a color, like cats in the dark. With mad joy in his heart Ahmed could not resist propelling the furious regent down hill, using the butt of his rifle and pretending he did not know who it was he was threatening with these indignities. And Umballa could not tell who his assailant was because he was given no opportunity to turn.

"Soor!" Ahmed shouted. "Swine! Take that, and that, and that!"

Stumbling on, Umballa cried out in pain; but he did not ask for mercy. "Soor! Tell your master, Durga Ram, how bites this gun butt as I shall tell mine the pleasure it gives me to administer it. Swine! Ha, you stumble! Up with you!"

Batter and bang! Doubtless Ahmed would have prolonged this delightful entertainment to the very steps of the palace, but a full troop of soldiers appeared at the foot of the hill and Ahmed saw that it was now his turn to take to his heels.

"Swine!" with a parting blow which sent Umballa to his knees, "tell your master that if he harms the little memsahib in the palace he shall die! Let him remember the warnings that he has received, and let him not forget what a certain dungeon holds!"

Umballa staggered to his feet, his sight blinded with tears of pain. He was sober enough now, and Ahmed's final words rang in his ears like a clamor of bells. "What a certain dungeon holds!" Stumbling down the hill, urged by Ahmed's blows, only one thought occupied his mind: to wreak his vengeance for these indignities upon an innocent girl. But now a new fear entered his craven soul, craven as all cruel souls are. Some one knew!

He fell into the arms of his troops, and they carried him to a litter, thence to the palace. His back was covered with bruises, and but for the thickness of his cummerbund he must have died under the beating, which had been thorough and masterly. "What a certain dungeon holds!" In his chamber Umballa called for his peg of brandy and champagne, which for some reason did not take hold as usual. For the first time in his life Durga Ram, so-called Umballa, knew what agony was. But did it cause him to think with pity of the agonies he had caused them? Not in the least.

When Ahmed rejoined his people Kathlyn was leaning against her father's shoulder, smiling wanly.

"Where is Umballa?" cried Bruce, seizing Ahmed by the arm.

"On the way to the palace!" Ahmed laughed and told what he had accomplished.

Bruce raised his hands in anger.

"But, sahib!" began Ahmed, not comprehending.

"And, having him in your hands, you let him go!"

Ahmed stood dumfounded. His jaw sagged, his rifle slipped from his hands and fell with a clank at his feet.

"You are right, sahib. I am an unthinking fool. May Allah forgive me!"

"We could have held him a hostage, and tomorrow morning we all could have left Allaha free, unhindered! God forgive you, Ahmed, for not thinking!"

"In the heat of battle, sahib, one does not always think of the morrow." But Ahmed's head fell and his chin touched his breast. That he, Ahmed of the secret service, should let spite overshadow forethought and to be called to account for it! He was disgraced.

"Never mind, Ahmed," said Kathlyn kindly. "What is done is done. We must find safety. We shall have to hide in the jungle tonight. And there is my sister. You should have thought, Ahmed."

"Umballa will not harm a hair of her head," replied Ahmed, lifting his head.

"Your work has filled his heart with venom," declared Bruce hotly.

"And my words, sahib, have filled his veins with water," replied Ahmed, now smiling.

"What do you mean?" demanded the colonel.

"Ask Ramabai. Perhaps he will tell you."

"That," returned Ramabai, "is of less importance at this moment than the method to be used in liberating the daughter of Colonel Sahib. Listen. The people are angry because they were not permitted to be present at the sacrifice to Juggernaut. To pacify them Umballa will have to invent some amusement in the arena."

"But how will that aid us?" interrupted the colonel.

"Let us say, an exhibition of wild animals, with their trainers."

"Trainers?"

"Yes. You, Colonel Sahib, and you, Kathlyn Memsahib, and you, Bruce Sahib, will without difficulty act the parts."

"Good!" said Ahmed bitterly. "The three of them will rush into the royal box, seize Winnie Memsahib, and carry her off from under the very noses of Umballa, the Council and the soldiers!"

"My friend Ahmed is bitter," said Ramabai patiently. "Al, al! I had Umballa in my hands and let him go! Pardon me, Ramabai; I am indeed bitter."

"But who will suggest this animal scheme to Umballa?" inquired Bruce.

"I," Ramabai salaamed.

"You will walk into the lion's den?"

"The jackals," Ramabai corrected.

"God help me! If I only had a few men!" groaned the colonel, raising his hands to heaven.

"You will be throwing away your life uselessly, Ramabai," said Kathlyn.

"No. Umballa and I will understand each other completely."

"Ramabai," put in Ahmed, with his singular smile, "do you want a crime?"

"For myself? No again. For my wife? That is a different matter."

"And the man in the dungeon?" ironically.

Ramabai suddenly faced the moon and stared long and silently at the brilliant planet. In his mind there was conflict, war between right and ambition. He seemed to have forgotten those about him, waiting anxiously for him to speak.

"Ramabai," said Ahmed craftily, "at a word from you a thousand armed men will spring into existence and within twelve hours set Pundita on yonder throne. Why do you hesitate to give the sign?"

Ramabai wheeled quickly.

"Ahmed, silence! I am yet an honorable man. You know and I know how far I may go. Trifle with me no more."

Ahmed salaamed deeply.

"Think not badly of me, Ramabai; but I am a man of action, and it galls me to wait."

"Are you wholly unselfish?"

It was Ahmed's turn to address mute inquiries to the moon.

"What is all this palaver about?" Bruce came in between the two men impatiently.

"God knows!" murmured the colonel. "One thing I know, if we stand here much longer we'll all spend the rest of the night in prison."

There was wisdom in this. They marched away at once, following the path of the elephant and the loyal keepers. There was no pursuit. Soldiers with purses filled with promises are not over-eager to face skilled marksmen. The colonel and his followers, not being aware of this indiscretion, proposed camping in the first spot which afforded protection from the chill of night, not daring to make for the bungalow, certain that it was being watched. In this they were wise, for a cordon of soldiers (with something besides promises in their purses) surrounded the camp on the chance that its owner might hazard a return.

"Now, Ramabai, what is your plan?" asked the colonel, as he wrapped Kathlyn in the howdah blanket. "We are to pose as animal trainers. Good. What next?"

"A trap and a tunnel."

"Ah!"

"There used to be one. A part of it caved in four or five years ago. It can be re-excavated in a night. The men who do that shall be my own. Your animals will be used. To Kathlyn Memsahib your pet leopards will be as play fellows. She has the eye, and the voice, and the touch. She shall be veiled to her eyes, with a bit of ochre on her forehead. Who will recognize her?"

"The sight of you, Ramabai, will cause him to suspect."

"That remains in the air. There must be luck in it."

"If Umballa can be lured to drink his pegs." Then, with an impatient gesture, Ahmed added: "Folly! What! Umballa and the Council will not recognize the Colonel Sahib's hair, the memsahib's golden head?"

"In the go-down of Lal Singh, the cobbler, there are many things, even wigs and false beards," retorted Ramabai slyly.

Ahmed started, then laughed.

"You are right, Ramabai. So then we have wigs and beards. Go on." He was sitting cross-legged and rocking back and forth.

"After the tricks are done Kathlyn Memsahib will throw aside her veil and stand revealed, to Umballa, to the Council, to the populace."

Bruce jumped to his feet.

"Be patient, Bruce Sahib," reproved Ramabai. "I am not yet done."

Bruce sat down again, and Kathlyn stole a glance at his lean, unhappy face. How she longed to touch it, to smooth away the lines of care! The old camaraderie was gone; there seemed to be some invisible barrier between them now.

"She will discover herself, then," proceeded Ramabai. "Umballa will at once start to order her capture, when she shall stay him by crying that she is willing to face the arena lions. Remember, there will be a trap and a tunnel."

"And outside?" said Ahmed, still doubting.

"There will be soldiers, my men. But they will at that moment be elsewhere."

"If you have soldiers, then, why not slip them into the palace and have them take the young memsahib by force?"

of the lions the trap will fall. Inside the tunnel will be the Colonel Sahib and Bruce Sahib. Outside will be Ahmed and the brave men he had with him this night. And all the road free to the gates!"

"Ah, for those thousand men!" sighed Ahmed. "I cannot forget them."

"Nor I the dungeon-keep," replied Ramabai. "I must go my own way. Of the right and wrong of it you are not concerned, Ahmed."

"By the Lord!" exclaimed the colonel, getting up. "I begin to understand. He is alive, and they hold him there in a den, vile like mine was. Alive!"

"Umballa did not put him there. It was the politics of the Council; and this is the sword which Umballa holds over their heads. And if I summoned my thousand men their zeal for me . . ."

"Pardon, Ramabai!" cried Ahmed, contritely. "Pardon!"

"Ah! finally you understand?"

"Yes. You are not only a good man but a great one. If you gave the sign to your men there would be no one in yonder dungeon-keep . . . alive!"

"They know, and I could not stay tempest once I loosed it. There, that is all. That is the battle I have fought and won."

The colonel reached down and offered his hand.

"Ramabai, you're a man."

"Thanks, sahib. And I tell you this: I love my people. I was born among them. They are simple and easily led. I wish to see them happy, but I cannot step over the dead body of one who was kind to me. And this I add: When you, my friends, are free, I will make him free also. Young men are my followers, and in the blood of the young there is much heat. My plan may appear to you weak and absurd, but I know my people. Besides, it is our only chance."

"Well, Ramabai, we will try your plan, though I do so half heartedly. So many times have we escaped, only to be brought back. I am tired, in the heart, in the mind, in the body. I want to lie down somewhere and sleep for days."

Kathlyn reached out, touched his hand and patted it. She knew. The pain and terror in his heart were not born of his own miseries, but of theirs, hers and Winnie's.

"Why doesn't my brain snap?" she queried inwardly. "Why doesn't the thread break? Why can't I cry and laugh and grow hysterical like other women?"

"I shall take charge of everything," continued Ramabai. "Your tribulations affect my own honor. None of you must be seen, however; not even you, Ahmed. I shall keep you informed. Ahmed will instruct the keepers to obey me. No harm will come to them, since no one can identify them as having been Umballa's assailants. My wife will not be molested in any way for remaining at the bungalow."

Without another word Ramabai curled himself up and went to sleep; and one by one the others followed his example. Bruce was last to close his eyes. He glanced moodily round, noted the guards patrolling the boundaries of their secluded camp; and then he looked down at Kathlyn. Only a bit of her forehead was exposed. One brown, shapely hand clutched the howdah blanket. A patch of moonshine touched her temple. Silently he stooped and laid a kiss upon the hand.

Kathlyn Disguised as a Bear Tamer.

then crept over to Ahmed and lay down with his back to the Moham-medan's.

After awhile the hand clutching the howdah blanket slid under and finally nestled beneath the owner's chin.

But Winnie could not sleep. Every sound brought her to an upright position; and tonight the palace seemed charged with mysterious noises. The muttering of the cockatoo, the tinkle of the fountain as the water fell into the basin, the scrape and slither of sandals beyond the lattice partitions, the rattle of a gun butt somewhere in the outer corridors—these sounds she heard. Once she thought she heard the sputter of rifle shots afar, but she was not sure.

Kit, beautiful Kit! O, they would not, could not let her die! And she had come into this land with her mind aglow with fairy stories!

One of the leopards in the treasury corridors roared, and Winnie crouched into her cushions. What were they going to do to her? For she understood perfectly that she was only a prisoner and that the crown meant nothing at all so far as authority was concerned. She was the veriest pup-

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